PART ONE

I. THE HISTORY OF SYRIA[1]

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101 131 EVEN were there no Syrian people a Syrian problem would still exist. Syria owes its political importance less to the qualities of its population than to its geographical position. Before its history can be fully understood, it is necessary to grasp the nature of the land and its relation with the surrounding world.

Syria is part of a larger area which may be treated as a single unit, in the sense that the course of affairs in one part of it has always had a peculiarly close relationship with that in some or 131 all of the other parts. The southern base of this area is the 133 Arabian peninsula, bounded on the west by the Red Sea, on the south by the Indian Ocean, and on the east by the Persian Gulf. The west of the peninsula, the Hejaz and Yemen, is hilly and in parts fertile, and so too is a smaller area in the south-east; but the greater portion of the interior is fit only for pasturage, except in the oases. In the south, it is a sandy waste, in the centre, Nejd, a dry, hilly and often stony steppe. North of Nejd there is another belt of sand; and north of this belt is the dry steppe of the Syrian Desert, growing narrower as it goes northwards. Running in a semi-circle around the edge of the Syrian Desert is the 'Fertile Crescent', a belt of cultivable land bounding the area of pasturage. It may itself be divided into two parts. The western part is a land of mountain-ranges, valleys and plains; this is geographical Syria. The eastern part is a vast plain, created and maintained by the two great rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, which run southwards through it, finally meeting and flowing together into the Persian Gulf; this is Iraq or Mesopotamia. The Fertile Crescent is bounded on the west by the Mediterranean Sea and on the south-east by the head-waters of the Persian Gulf. In the north and east it is hemmed in by mountain-ranges: to the north the Taurus Mountains, the southern part of the Anatolian highlands which stretch across Asia Minor, to the north-east the mountains of Kurdistan, and to the east the Persian plateau. Joined to the western part of the Fertile Crescent by the peninsula of Sinai, but separated from Arabia by the Red Sea, is the land of Egypt, the fertile valley of the Nile surrounded by sandy deserts.

[1] In Chapters I–IV the word 'Syria' is used to refer to 'geographical Syria' as defined in the Introduction.

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BLACK SEA
CASPIAN SEA
ANATOLIA
MEDITERRANEAN
MESOPOTAMIA
Syrian Desert
EGYPT
NEJD
HEJAZ
Rub al-Khali
HADRAMAUT
INDIAN OCEAN
NEAR EAST. Geographical Regions
Land over 1500 metres
High Land under 1500 metres

/3/ Thus the boundaries of Syria may be defined as the Taurus Mountains to the north, the Mediterranean to the west, Sinai and Hejaz to the south, and northern Mesopotamia and the Syrian Desert to the east. Its length is rather more than 500 miles, and the breadth of its cultivable area varies between 100 and 150 miles.

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/33/ It is itself split up into several regions clearly marked off from one another by main lines of division running roughly from north to south, with subsidiary lines running from east to west. The first region is the Mediterranean coastal belt, in some places broad enough to be called a plain, for example the plain of Akkar, but in others no more than a narrow strip; [504] in general, it broadens as it goes south. Although it has few good natural harbours, it is studded with famous ports: Alexandretta, Latakia, Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon, Tyre, Haifa and Jaffa. East of it is a highland belt: the Amanus in the north, then the Jebel Ansariyah, rising to some 5,000 ft., then Lebanon, of which the peaks reach 10,000 ft., and then the Palestinian hills, bounded on the south by the arid district of the Negeb. This belt is scarred with the valleys of streams flowing westwards to the sea, and cut across by a number of gaps, through some of which rivers flow: the plain of Antioch, the gap between Tripoli and Homs and the plain of Esdraelon. East of these ranges runs a line of comparatively narrow depressions varying in character from north to south. In the north there are the plain of al-Amq, the Orontes valley and the Ghab marshes; south of them lies the Biqa' valley; then the broken country in which lie the sources of the Jordan; then the swampy district of Hulah; then the narrow valley of the Jordan, lying below sea-level, opening out at one point into the Sea of Galilee and ending in the Dead Sea; and finally the Wadi Araba, leading down to the Red Sea at Aqaba. A number of important rivers run for part of their courses along these depressions: the Orontes flowing north and then west, the Litani south and then west, and the Jordan south. Here also lie the important lakes of Syria: those of Homs and Hulah, the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The line of depressions is interrupted by the ridge of Baalbek, the watershed between the Orontes and Litani; and farther south is linked with the coastal plain by the Esdraelon Gap.

132 region to another. On some mountain heights it is over 40 in., while in the desert areas it sinks almost to nothing. The temperature also varies greatly, in general increasing from west to east and to a lesser extent from north to 132 south. The differences of rainfall and temperature, together 311 with such other factors as the presence or absence of rivers 241 and springs, give rise to great differences in fertility and vegetation. The coastal regions have a Mediterranean climate, and are often well watered both by rainfall and by rivers; they are suitable for cereals, tobacco and many kinds of fruit. The seaward slopes of the maritime ranges have a more temperate climate, and terraces of cultivable soil on which olive trees and vines can grow; but the eastern slopes are more barren. The central depression has a sub-tropical climate. Parts of it are well watered by rivers and are fertile. In the Jordan Valley, fruits can be cultivated, and cereals in the more northern parts of the inner depression. Much of the inner range is dry and barren; but on the plateaux of the north and of Transjordan there is sufficient rainfall to make possible the cultivation of cereals. This is true also of the Hauran and Jebel Druze. The Ghutah is suitable with irrigation for the growing of fruits of many kinds. East of the inner range the rainfall becomes scantier, the heat more intense, and the land less fertile; until finally it becomes too arid to be suitable for anything but pasturage. But across the Euphrates conditions change once more, and it is possible to grow cereals in the river valleys of the Jazirah.

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131 The nature of Syrian history has been deeply affected by the structure and position of the land. It is largely a history of economic, political and other movements affecting the whole area of which Syria forms a part. To those movements Syria has served at times as a starting-point, at others as a terminus or a bridge.

439 The first of the movements has been that of world trade. Syria has almost always been an important link in the trade-routes which connect the Mediterranean world with India and the Far East; and its own products, oil, grain, textiles and metal work, have at times found a market in the Western world. Another and more specialized trade has been that with

THE "SYKES-PICOT" AGREEMENT, 1916

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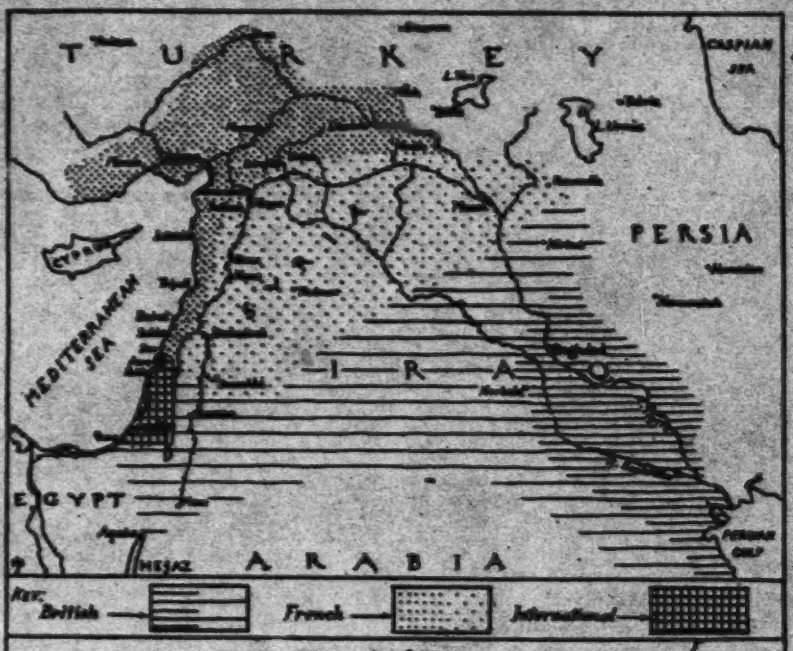

THE BRITISH AND FRENCH MANDATED TERRITORIES, 1922

T U R K
HATAY
A L E P P O
E U P H
HAMA
LATAKIA
H O M S
D A M A S C U S
JEBEL DRUZE
TRANSJORDA

END MAP (A)

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END MAP (B)

PHYSICAL FEATURES

طول حدود الجمهورية السورية
BOUNDARIES OF THE SYRIAN REPUBLIC

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Table No. 1 جدول رقم ١

Coasts and Neighbouring Countries	Length of boundary kms. طول الحدود بالكيلو متر	per cent of total length % النسبة الى طول الحدود بالمئة	الشواطئ والبلاد المجاورة
Total	2,274	100.0	المجموع
The Mediterranean Sea	173	7.6	البحر الابيض المتوسط
Turkey	808	35.5	تركيا
Iraq	592	26.1	العراق
Transjordan	353	15.5	شرق الاردن
Palestine	70	3.1	فلسطين
Lebanon	278	12.3	لبنان

Source : Ministry of Public Works المصدر : وزارة الاشغال العامة

مساحة البحيرات الرئيسية في الجمهورية السورية
AREA OF PRINCIPAL LAKES IN THE SYRIAN REPUBLIC

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Table No. 2 جدول رقم ٢

Name of Lake	Location	Area km2 المساحة كم٢	موقعها الجغرافي	اسم البحيرة
Qattineh	Near Homs	60	قرب حمص	قطينة
El-Ghab	" Jisr-ash-Shugour	300	قرب جسر الشغور	الغاب
Jabbul	" Aleppo	150	قرب حلب	جبول
Otaibeh	" Damascus	64	قرب دمشق	منيبة
Hijaneh	" Damascus	24	" "	هيجانة
Jeirud	" Damascus	15	" "	جيرود
Mzeirib	" Dir'a	1	قرب درعا	مزيريب
Khatuniyeh	" Hassakeh	2	قرب الحسكة	خاتونية

Source : Ministry of Public Works المصدر : وزارة الاشغال العامة

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 MI Middle East
SYRIA MDI
LEBANON MEI

Chapter Ten

SYRIA AND LEBANON

The Land and the People

The area of the present Syria and Lebanon lies to the north of Arabia Deserta and is the western horn of the Fertile Crescent. The two republics do not enclose within their boundaries a natural geographic entity and their climate and topography are best studied in relation to the surrounding countries;[1] but within the political boundaries of the two states, the following geographical divisions may roughly be distinguished:

(1) *The Coastal Strip*. This is about twenty miles wide near Latakia and rather less just north of Tripoli, but in some places disappears and the mountains meet the sea. Olives, bananas, citrus, and vegetables are cultivated intensively near Beirut.

(2) *The Mountains*. Starting from the north, the first coastal mountains are the Jebel Ansariya (also known as the Alawi Mountains) which average 4,000 feet and are well populated on the western slopes. To the south is the Homs–Tripoli gap and then starts the Lebanon range with peaks of over 10,000 feet. Even on the upper slopes of this range water is plentiful, there is close cultivation, and the villages and towns are prosperous. Near Beirut are situated the mountain resorts to which most of the city workers move each night when the summer brings its humid heat. The interior ranges of mountains lying parallel to that of the Lebanon are the Anti-Lebanon (between Homs and Zahle) reaching over 7,000 feet and the range of Hermon (between Zahle and the Israel border) which reaches 9,200 feet. Water and cultivation are far less plentiful on these than on the coastal mountains. Farther inland still and to the south of Damascus lie the Leja, a bleak area of igneous rock, and the Jebel Druze, which reaches 5,000–6,000 feet and lies north of the Jordan border.

(3) *Plains and Plateaux*. Hardly any of the territory of Syria and Lebanon lies less than 700 feet above sea-level and south of Hama almost all the land is over 1,600 feet. The richest agricultural land is on fairly high ground and forms part of a

[1] See W. B. Fisher, *The Middle East; a Physical, Social, and Regional Geography* (London, Methuen, 1950).

59: Allen et al S-3 (1952-53) 1953 MI Middle East
Syria mD1

SYRIA

(Visited 13 - 19 January 1953)

131 162 132 58. The Republic of Syria covers approximately 55,700 square miles and has an estimated population of 2,900,000 (including nomads 3,200,000), Arabic speaking and mainly Moslems. There is at present no problem of over-population. Much of the country is at present rain-fed dry land.

311 312 The total cultivable area is 12,500,000 acres of which about 1/3 is under cultivation. Many irrigation projects have been started or are in contemplation. The systems of irrigation do not expose the peasantry in the same degree as in Egypt to bilharzia and the climate is invigorating for much of the year.

241 231 59. Agriculture and cattle breeding are the principal industries. A recent government decree laid down that land not registered must be put at the disposal of the State, who will sell it at a low price in lots of 50 hectares. The land which is thus to be acquired is State Domain which at various times has been appropriated and cultivated by the big land-owning families. The areas involved are said to be 2.3 million hectares of cultivable land and 3.6 million hectares of grazing.

423 185 The land which is to be redistributed must be exploited within 2 years from the date of purchase and must not be resold, although it may be mortgaged to the Agricultural Bank. The Bank will give financial help for the purchase and development of the land.

60. The scheme has been criticized on the ground that in order to avoid a fall in production from the large estates now being cultivated through private capital and a stop being put to the further exploitation of hitherto uncultivated land, the Government will require to make provision for the supply of capital and expert advice to new peasant owners. A scheme for the drainage of a considerable tract in the Jezirah area, known as the Ghab Swamp, is being drawn up as a result of a survey of the area by a foreign firm of engineers. This will also require large capital expenditure.

61. The financing of land redistribution schemes is outside the scope of our mission as is the furnishing of expert advice on new agricultural methods for the more successful exploitation of small estates, except in so far as agricultural extension services can be combined with health and other services appropriate to community welfare organization.

62. The possibility of the Syrian Government's applying for outside technical assistance for any of the above-mentioned purposes is a matter of high policy which we did not feel justified in discussing with the officials whom we had occasion to meet during our visit to Damascus.

647 657 185 63. Dr. Joukhadar, the Director of Labour and Social Affairs, gave the mission the text of a project law (Appendix IV) that had been drafted in his department for establishing rural community centres, somewhat on the lines of those that exist in Egypt.

64. The Decree contemplates that in each province a model centre be established to provide all requisite economic, health, cultural, social and administrative services, this being "the only institution that can undertake all the responsibilities and guarantee the success of a programme of village improvement which does not involve

63-Simmons et al G-5 (1941-1951) 1954
M1 Middle East
SYRIA MO1

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Syria

GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

The Republic of Syria was constituted in 1943, when France relinquished control over the mandated territories of Lebanon and Syria. Geographically and ethnically Syria forms an integral part of the eastern Mediterranean region, but politically it has undergone progressive modification since the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire following World War I. Considerable confusion in terminology arises from the fact that the entire area was then designated as Syria. It was mandated to France by the League of Nations in 1923 as the separate territories of Syria and Lebanon. Subsequently, for a brief period the region was divided into the autonomous "Levant States" of Lebanon, Syria, Latakia and Jebel ed Druz. With the annexation of Latakia and Jebel ed Druz as provincial units in 1936, and the cession of the Alexandretta district to Turkey in 1939, the present boundaries of Syria were established. The country now includes an area of approximately 71,000 square miles. In the west, it has a coastline of about 104 miles on the Mediterranean Sea and, to the south, common frontiers with Lebanon and northern Israel. Inland, it is surrounded by Turkey on the north, Iraq on the east and the southeast, and Jordan on the south.

The interior of the country is essentially a semiarid plateau, sloping to the basins of the Euphrates and the Tigris, and backed by chains of mountains in the north and the west. The highlands on the Turkish border are not well defined, but those in the west differentiate distinct geographic regions. In the north, the Nusairiyeh mountains, with elevations up to 5,000 feet,

p. 135(A)